

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRETOR 05353 111721Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
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AMEMBASSY GABORONE
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AMEMBASSY LILONGWE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 5353

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, PINT, PINS, RH
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: SMITH'S SPEECH: REACTIONS AND REASONS

REFS: PRETORIA 5326; MAPUTO 1145 (NOTAL)

1. PRELIMINARY REACTION ON THE DOMESTIC RHODESIAN SCENE TO SMITH'S SEPTEMBER 10 SPEECH (REF A) SEEMS TO BE ONE OF DISAPPOINTMENT. ACCORDING TO SOUTH AFRICAN RADIO REPORTS FROM RHODESIA, THE SPEECH ONLY WNT "PART OF THE WAY TO APPEASING THOSE LOOKING FOR ACTION." A AND WAS "DISAPPOINTING TO MILITANTS." ONE ACCOUNT CITES A CALL-IN TELETHON DURING WHICH THREE CALLERS ASKED FOR SMITH'S RESIGNATION. LANCE REYNOLDS OF THE NATIONAL UNIFYING FRONT IS QUOTED AS SAYING SMITH "SOLVED NO PROBLEMS, PUT FORWARD NO SOLUTIONS...(HE IS) A MAN WHO HAS RUN OUT OF IDEAS." THE HEARLD REPORTS "WIDESPREAD CRITICISM" OF THE SPEECH AND CITES WHITE REACTIONS FROM BULAWAYO, UMTALI AND OTHER
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OUTLYING AREAS.

2. DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVE HAWKINS PASSED US A TELEX FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS IN SALISBURY ON THE SPEECH WHICH INCLUDED A BRIEF RESUME OF SOME REACTIONS AS FOLLOWS:
QUOTE: THERE HAS BEEN SOME ANGRY PUBLIC REACTION TO THE PM'S SPEECH FROM PEOPLE DEMANDING POSITIVE ACTION. IT IS NOT

CERTAIN HOW WIDESPREAD THIS IS BUT PUBLIC EMOTION OVER THE VISCOUNT IS STILL HIGH. FEELING WAS SUMMED UP IN THE SUNDAY MAIL OF 10 SEPTEMBER WHICH REPLACED ITS NORMAL EDITORIA PAGE CARTOON WITH A DRAWING OF THE VISCOUNT WRECKAGE WITH THE CAPTION IN LARGE LETTERS "WE SHALL NOT FORGET." A VISITING JOURNALIST SAID HE HAD BEEN IN ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA DURING THE RECENT WAS AND IN SAIGON JUST BEFORE ITS FALL AND HAD RARELY ENCOUNTERED SUCH AN EMOTIONALLY CHARGED ATMOSPHERE AS CURRENTLY EXISTS IN SALISBURY. END QUOTE.

3. WHILE WE CANNOT OFFER AN INDEPENDENT FIRST-HAND ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECT OF THE AIR RHODESIA KILLINGS, AMBASSADOR LOW'S ACCOUNT (REF B) AND ANOTHER CONVEYED TO US BY CHRISITAN SCIENCE MONITOR CORRESPONDENT JUNE GOODWIN INDICATE THAT THIS INCIDENT HAS HAD A CATALYZING EFFECT ON THE WHITE POPULATION. GOODWIN WHO JUST RETURNED FROM SEVERAL WEEKS IN RHODESIA, TOLD EMBOFF THAT RURAL WHITES WERE FORMING "POSSES" AND ROAMING THE COUNTRYSIDE AFTER DARK SHOOTING BLACKS WHO WERE CAUGHT OUT. THE DEPTH OF PUBLIC FEELING MAY BE INDICATED BY PRESS REPORTS OF AN ANGRY DEMONSTRATION IN SALISBURY ON SEPTEMBER 8 OUTSIDE A CATHEDRAL AFTER A MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE DISASTER, WHICH SMITH ATTENDED. REPORTEDLY, SEVERAL HUNDRED PERSONS GATHERED AND A NUMBER WHO WERE CARRYING VULGAR AND DEROGATORY PLACARDS CONFRONTED CLERGYMEN TAKING PART IN THE MEMORIAL. THERE WAS ONE ANGRY EXCHANGE WHERE A CLERGYMAN THREW ONE PLACARD IN THE GUTTER BUT ANOTHER DEMONSTRATOR REPORTEDLY

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TOLD HIM TO "GET OFF YOUR KNEES AND FIGHT."

4. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT SMITH WAS UNDER CONSIDERABLE PUBLIC PRESSURE TO ANNOUNCE DRASTIC MEASURES AND TO REVEAL OR PROMISE RETALIATION. SMITH ALSO MAY HAVE FACED PRESSURE FROM HIS EXCO COLLEAGUES TO MOVE AGAINST THE ZAPU FORCES IN AMBIA OR AT LEAST TO DENOUNCE NKOMO. SMITH THUS FINDS HIMSELF CAUGHT IN A RISING TIDE OF PUBLIC DEMAND FOR ACTION BUT HE HAS CLEARLY SOUGHT TO AVOID BURNING HIS BRIDGES WITH NKOMO OR THE FRONTLINE. APPARENTLY MEASURED REACTION SHOWS HE CHOSE A MIDDLE ROAD OF STRONG RHETORIC BUT LITTLE ACTION, FOCUSING HIS CRITICISM ON NYERERE AND THE UK. SO FAR, HOWEVER, IT APPEARS NOT TO HAVE GONE DOWN WELL WITH THE WHITE POPULATION, WHICH HAS BEEN SHAKEN BY THE ELIM MASSACRE, MUZOREWA'S MSANA TRIBAL TRUST LAND MEETING, THE SMITH/NOMO MEETING, THE AIR RHODESIA KILLINGS AND MOST RECENTLY THE UMTALI SHELLING. TO MAINTAIN MORALE AND A BARGAINING POSITION, SMITH MAY STILL FEEL OBLIGED TO AUTHORIZE A MILITARY STRIKE INTO ZAMBIA OR EVEN MOZAMBIQUE OR BOTSWANA. SMITH AND THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT HAVE BEEN FURTHER WEAKENED BY THE EVENTS OF THE PAST FEW WEEKS. A CRITICAL FACTOR TO WATCH NOW IS THE ATTITUDE OF THE RHODESIAN MILITARY LEADERS.

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